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Melvin University
and Me

Inactive members of the church

This is also an unavoidable subject in the church. According to one statistic, about 40% of church members in the United States do not attend services regularly, which means they are inactive, passive. Of course, most churches in the world as well as the United States have the same problem, and churches here in Kenya have the same problem. The same is true even in our university church.

Therefore, such the church should pay more attention to those people because there is always a chance and risk of their leaving the church soon. However, most churches 'close the back door' too early when those people leave the church. When I was an associate pastor in Korea, I often found such a tendency. In other words, when they leave the church, they quickly forget and closes the back door too hastily, concluding that they have gone. We don't have to be so hasty, and I think it's always good to leave the back door open, and give them time and room to think again.

There is one ministry in the States. It was Stephen Ministry (by Dr. Kenneth Haug) who took this problem seriously in the church of the United States and created it as a ministry of Parachurch organization. Dr. Kenneth Haug, as a psychology expert, began to ponder, "Why do people become passive and inactive?" So I wrote the book,

discovering 33 reasons for being inactive, "Reopening the Back Door". He also made a 300-page training manual with this book. While I was studying this book and training manual, I translated it into Korean and used it several times during our seminars.

The characteristic of this ministry is a very good training textbook focused on the [caring for people in crisis]. It is a kind of crisis caring ministry. The training textbook shows why people leave the church they had attended for years, with '33 reasons' written. This is a useful material for understanding those people. Some of the main reasons for leaving are: 1) lack of good relationships with each other, 2) found the church meaningless, 3) weakened sense of belonging, and so on, and gradually prepared to leave the church as it became inactive. Then, when they left the church, the emphasis was on 'allowing those who left like that to come back.' It is said that possible only through one-on-one care, so it is necessary to understand one-on-one. Because each person has a different (33 reasons), so that's inevitable.

What this resource contributes to is, unconditionally, once people who have become passive in church, and those who have left...rather than closing the back door hastily while leaving out, it is 'to help them understand why they became passive and why they left the church.'

Another book is "Closing the back door," which I remember was written by Pastor Myung Sung-hoon a long time ago. The 'back door should be closed' so that people who are likely to leave the church cannot leave.

I was very interested to read these two books together. One focused on those who would leave ("Close the backdoor"), and the other on those who had just left. ("Open the backdoor again"). Our Reverend Melvin's lay pastors' ministry started with caring for people inside first,

but both concepts of caring for both sides of the people who have just left are emphasized.

These two things, Stephen ministry and the lay pastors' ministry, coexist in the American church. (Stephen Ministry & Lay Pastors Ministry). Most American churches adopt one of these, or some have two ministries at the same time. Of course, there are some ministries developed by local churches (e.g., Caring Church, TLC, so on), but when speaking of the overall American church, they can be represented in these two ways. Anyway, I think it is a continuous task of the church to the inactive members.